



# OSWER Innovations Pilot

## ***Emergency Prevention, Preparedness, and Response in Smaller Communities***

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*The Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response (OSWER) initiated a series of innovative pilots to test new ideas and strategies for environmental and public health protection. A small amount of money is set aside to fund creative approaches to waste minimization, energy recovery, recycling, land revitalization, and homeland security that may be replicated across various sectors, industries, communities, and regions. We hope these pilots will pave the way for programmatic and policy recommendations by demonstrating the environmental and economic benefits of creative, innovative approaches to the difficult environmental challenges we face today.*

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### **BACKGROUND**

Homeland security enhancements and general chemical emergency preparedness in smaller communities is greatly hampered by the lack of meaningful assessment of the risks posed by chemicals in the community. In most of these communities the most significant risk of chemical release is presented by accidents at local facilities handling chemicals. Yet in most cases, the communities do not know how to assess their risks and evaluate their needs. Small communities typically are unaware of existing information sources on conducting risk assessments and lack the resources and training necessary to use available information.

### **PILOT APPROACH**

The Jefferson County Colorado Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) and the U.S. EPA will develop emergency planning materials to help small communities prepare adequately for chemical emergencies. Through the efforts of local emergency planning committees and risk management plans, a significant amount of information is available for use by local volunteer fire departments and emergency managers in preparing plans and assessing their needs for training and equipment. This pilot will focus on helping smaller communities make the best use of this available information. The Jefferson County LEPC will develop chemical emergency templates and other guides

for smaller communities to use in assessing risks. Brochures and other educational materials will be prepared for local emergency planning committees and first responders during their efforts to educate facilities handling chemicals on alternative approaches that present less risk to the local community. In addition, the LEPC will deliver training to an initial group of targeted Colorado local agencies. The Jefferson County LEPC will draw upon its experience in working with available information sources, assessing risks from hazardous chemicals, and working with local emergency planning committees and first responders to successfully complete this pilot.

### **INNOVATION**

Many smaller communities are unaware of the tools available to them in assessing the risks they face locally. With far less resources available to them, small communities are at a disadvantage, in comparison to larger communities, in the area of assessing risks and preparing plans on how to respond to chemical emergencies. This project will develop specific tools targeting the needs of smaller communities and presented in a format easily accessible to smaller communities.

### **BENEFITS**

The project will result in improved preparedness in smaller communities through enhanced assessment of risks and needs. Small communities with limited resources will be able to assess their risks, determine their needs, and train industries in safer chemical management practices. Past experience has shown that working with local industries to plan for emergencies results in greatly improved relationships between the local community and industrial facility. Without the basis for a good relationship, first responders and industrial facilities often are in conflict.

## **CONTACTS**

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For additional information, visit the EPA OSWER Innovations web site at: [www.epa.gov/oswer/iwg](http://www.epa.gov/oswer/iwg).